

**BALTIMORE CITY DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING  
URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE REVIEW PANEL  
MEETING MINUTES**

**Date:** June 18, 2015

**Project:** Merritt Site - Phase I- Garage/Gym Building

**Phase:** Continued Schematics

**Location:** Canton Crossing – Canton/Brewers Hill Neighborhoods

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**PRESENTATION:**

Architect Mike Burton of the Urban Design Group, before discussing the architectural design itself, introduced Mike Pieranunzi of Century Engineering who reviewed the landscape design aspects of the overall project.

**Landscape** - The Boston Street streetscape design intent was described as creating an appropriate urban street edge with 17 feet (outside curb to face of building) of sidewalk primarily defined with ornamental flowering trees in extended raised planters, an indented building entrance auto dropoff and pavement articulation growing out of the buildings brick pier locations. Sidestreets, South Highland and Baylis Streets, as well as Cardiff Avenue utilize shade trees in a more or less regular spacing with Highland and Baylis accommodating parking and service access. No landscaping was proposed on the small service street between the buildings. Additional landscape elements will be provided by the developer on portions of the north side of Baylis Street to complete the design. Additional parallel parking will be provided along Cardiff Avenue and the Cardiff Avenue median will accommodate a row of ornamental trees.

**The Garage/Gym Building** – the new building, which replaces an existing outdoor/convertible swimming pool and deck, was described as primarily accommodating a multi-level parking garage as well as an expansion of the existing fitness center creating a new pedestrian entrance at the corner of Baylis and Cardiff Avenue with a projected metal canopy. The three exposed faces of the building will employ brick frames/piers with metal screening mesh infills. The partial top floor and the corner of Baylis and Cardiff will utilize butt-glazed curtain wall with reflective blue/grey glass and metal fins to call attention to this entrance corner.

**Comments from the Panel:**

The Panel felt that its previous comments had not been addressed sufficiently and that an overall design philosophy about the project and its context had not been made clear, particularly the relationship between the two buildings themselves and the developing local environment. The presentation was not aided by the inconsistencies in the architectural and landscape drawings. There remain areas that require more study and resolution, particularly as they address the “urban” relationship along Boston Street and the overall design and massing of the “signature” Boston Street building.

1. **Landscape/Urban Design Relationships** – The Panel voiced several issues regarding landscape and urban design issues as follows:
  - a. That more attention be given to the strengthening of the edge condition along Boston Street that secures a safer and protected environment for pedestrians. This could include a greater setback, significant tree line, higher plant/planter barriers, wider sidewalks, and /or a continuous covered arcade. The currently proposed condition seems more appropriate for streets in Fells Point than the quasi-suburban nature of this portion of Boston Street;
  - b. Substantially scaled shade trees along Boston Street should be considered versus smaller ornamental trees;

- c. Consider shifting the Boston Street drop-off area toward Baylis Street to align with the actual entrance to the office building and lessen the conflict with the right turning lane traffic into the shopping center;
  - d. Provide more detail regarding the proposed improvements along the existing fitness center exterior walls on South Highland and Baylis;
  - e. Consider moving the garage parking ramp entrance to another location along South Highland (or to Baylis Street) so that it is not so prominently featured opposite the existing small pedestrian park and is not located behind glass storefronts.
2. **The Garage/Gym Building** – Although, as initially proposed by the Architect, this building was to be based on the Boston Street Building design, it is difficult to understand the relationship, if any, between the two buildings with the Boston Street design yet unresolved. However, the Panel offers the following comments:
- a. Consider studying the internal planning of the garage such that the ramp could be relocated from the corner of Cardiff and South Highland for the urban design reasons listed above. It was further suggested that the corner treatment and secondary gym entrance be relocated to this corner so that it had a stronger relationship with the existing pedestrian areas rather than toward the shopping center parking lot.
  - b. Avoid creating “imitation” storefronts along the ground level of the building.
  - c. Consider creating internal headlight barriers inside the parking garage, as well as effective evening lighting techniques. Define the proposed mesh/screen material being proposed.
  - d. Refine the masonry piers, header and concept (size and expression) to more clearly express the design intent of the building.
  - e. Continue to find ways that this building, as the extension of the existing gym, related to the existing metal shed gym building which will remain.
  - f. Find ways to architecturally express the active use parts of the building- the current proposal most of the emphasis and focus on parking levels, especially given that this will be the new front door to the entire gym facility.

**Panel Action:** Recommend continuing Schematic Phase addressing the above comments.

**Attending:**

Mike Burton, Nariman ElSaid, Jessica Lewis – Urban Design Group  
 Michael Pieranunzi – Century Engineering  
 Sarah Meehan – BBJ  
 Caroline Hecker – RMG  
 Gary Swatko - Merritt

Ms.Ilieva, Messrs. Bowden\*, Burns, Haresign and Rubin - UDARP Panel

Anthony Cataldo, Christina Hartsfield, Wolde Ararsa, Alex Hoffman, –Planning Dept